

Drought Response Technical Advisory Committee

DRAFT

Meeting Summary

February 27, 2003

10:00 AM – 3:30 PM

Attendance:

Drought Response Technical Advisory Committee Members

Art Petrini, County of Henrico; Dave DuGoff, Mid-Atlantic Car Wash Assoc.; Dave Hancock, National Spa and Pool Institute; Donna Johnson, VA Agribusiness Council; Jeri LeMay, VA Green Industry Council; John Haley, VA Golf Course Superintendents Assoc.; Josh Rubenstien, VA Rural Water Assoc.; Larry Land, VACO; Randy Buchanan, VA Sports Turf Managers Assoc.; Richard McDonnell, VA Hospitality and Travel Assoc.; Robert Royall, VA Water Well Assn.; Sheryl Raulston, VA Manufacturers Assn., Wilmer Stoneman, VA Farm Bureau Federation; Chris Adkins, VA Dept. of Health, Larry Holland, US Army Corps of Engineers; William S. Bullard, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic

In addition several members of the Virginia Drought Monitoring Task Force attended the meeting including:

Don Hayes, USGS; Jerry Peaks, VA Department of Health; Jerry Stenger, State Climatology Office; Roy Seward, VDACS; Keith Lynch, NWS; Terry Wagner, DEQ; Joe Hassell, DEQ; Scott Kudlas, DEQ

One member of the public attended the meeting:

Brent Waters, Golder and Associates

Discussion:

Terry Wagner of DEQ began the meeting by reiterating the purpose of the plan:

- (1) serve as a mechanism to describe drought impacts across regions of the state; and
- (2) provide a framework for deliberations of the Drought Monitoring Task Force.

Mr. Wagner reminded the TAC that the plan was not intended to be specific enough to do more than describe the drought and that demand measures may need implementation at the local level even when conditions are at the “watch” stage. In addition, he explained that the plan’s indicators will provide the structure needed to allow the Drought Monitoring Task Force to meet to consider drought conditions, consider aggravating or mitigating data, and decide whether or not to recommend that the Drought Coordinator take action.

Before moving to the next work item, Mr. Wagner reminded the TAC participants that it was very important that they try to represent the interests of their broader constituencies as we move further into plan development.

Mr. Wagner moved on to the review of the proposed drought monitoring plan. He began by reviewing comments received via e-mail:

- (1) Department of Forestry (DOF) Comments. Mr. Wagner said that these comments requested some recognition of wild fire concerns and suggested the Cumulative Severity Index could be of use as a drought indicator. He said that he considered this kind of information an example of some of the additional aggravating or mitigating data that could be considered by the Drought Monitoring Task Force. He also stated that the Governor's Executive Order allowed the Director of the DOF to impose burning bans on his own in emergency drought situations and suggested that this authority might be recommended in the plan.
- (2) Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) Comments. Mr. Wagner indicated that VDACS comments were similar to those of DOF but that VDACS wanted Extension agents to report agricultural drought conditions and serve as the point of contact for agricultural drought responses. Regarding these comments, there was discussion, initiated by Mr. Stoneman, expressing his concern that Extension no longer had an agent in every county nor were all agents experienced. Mr. Stoneman also cautioned against using only last year's drought emergency responses (regarding agriculture) as the only possible responses.
- (3) City of Portsmouth Comments. The City expressed concern that using 90 days of available storage in reservoirs as an indicator of drought may be a problem for their particular reservoir. The City noted that they experience water quality problems at that level. Mr. Wagner stated that there may be a need to further define "useable" available storage. Mr. Hassell suggested that the plan would need to address each system's specific refill characteristics.

Mr. Wagner moved on to lead a review of the proposed drought monitoring plan document. He stated that he felt he needed to go back and make some additions to the first paragraph, particularly the addition of a discussion on the use of long-range participation outlook as information for the Drought Monitoring Task Force to consider when making recommendations to the Drought Coordinator. This led to further discussion of the process the Task Force would use to make its recommendations to the Drought Coordinator. In response to questions raised in the discussion, Mr. Wagner indicated that he anticipated that the Task Force would meet quarterly to bimonthly during a "drought watch" and monthly to biweekly during a "drought warning." This line of discussion concluded with an explanation of the NOAA Drought Monitor, its uses and meaning.

The next discussion focussed on the proposed drought evaluation regions. There was significant discussion regarding the make-up of the Chowan basin. There was particular interest in the appropriate regions for Isle of Wight and Sussex counties. Ms. Raulston expressed her position that Isle of Wight County ought to be completely in the Chowan

region rather than partly in the Southern Coastal Plain region. Mr. Rubenstein raised an additional issue regarding the division of this region by two physiographic provinces, which may be an issue for ground water monitoring. Mr. Wagner presented his view of why he did not think that there would be a significant difference in how the water table aquifer reacts to drought in these two provinces. Mr. Wagner and Mr. Hassell agreed to review the Chowan region assignments. In addition, they agreed to review the appropriate regional assignment of New Kent and Charles City Counties. There was also agreement to move the Cities of Petersburg and Hopewell to the Middle James region.

The TAC moved on to a discussion of the proposed indicators:

- (1) Precipitation. There was general agreement on this indicator.
- (2) Streamflow. There was general agreement on this indicator. There was discussion that representative gages needed to be selected for each region. Mr. Hayes suggested that a tiered system may work the best. He explained that there could be a set of gages that served as initial indicators and that the number of gages used could expand as drought conditions warrant the need for additional data. Mr. Hayes agreed to assist Mr. Wagner on the selection of these gages.
- (3) Ground Water. Mr. Wagner informed the group that there may be enough usable ground water monitoring sites in each region so that his proposed wholesale use of precipitation deficit would be used only in those instances where there is not a suitable monitoring well coverage. Mr. Hayes will assist Mr. Wagner in selecting wells for each region.
- (4) Reservoir Storage. There was general acceptance regarding the 60-90-120 days of available storage as a base indicator. Mr. Wagner reiterated his feeling that additional work needed to take place to clarify the definition of available storage. There was further discussion of what was meant by having the term “criteria” in parenthesis after a particular reservoir. Mr. Wagner and Mr. Hassell explained that those were multi-purpose reservoirs that did not have water supply storage criteria. This meant that individual criteria would need to be developed for each reservoir so indicated.
- (5) Mr. Wagner concluded the indicator discussion by stating his intent to rewrite the “Other Indicators” section of the plan.

The TAC moved on to a discussion of the declaration of drought stages. There was discussion regarding the number of indicators that needed to be met to trigger a particular stage and the uniqueness of certain regions. Ms. Johnson suggested that it should be clear that the Task Force could rely on trend information in addition to the indicators to make a recommendation regarding a declaration. In addition, she requested that consideration should be given to using any requests for federal agricultural drought disaster declarations as well as subsequent designations. This concluded the review of the proposed Drought Monitoring Plan.

The TAC moved on to a discussion of the responses contained in the Maryland and Pennsylvania plans. Mr. Wagner pointed out to the TAC the different regulatory and voluntary bases of the two plans. He reiterated that Virginia was not proposing to implement this drought response plan in a regulatory framework at this time.

A discussion took place regarding the “watch” and “warning” stages. Mr. DuGoff pointed out that even at the “watch” stage it is important that demand management responses be phased in early enough to result in real reductions. In general, the TAC advised that the plan should be sensitive on how percent reduction goals are presented for responses used in the “watch” and “warning” stages given their voluntary nature. Mr. Petrini pointed out the importance of allowing the flushing of lines which the Maryland plan suggests be eliminated. He noted the role that flushing plays in maintaining municipal drinking water quality. Additional discussion centered on how to deal with businesses that have taken material steps to reduce water consumption. Mr. DuGoff suggested that car washes that use recycling systems should be exempted from mandatory water restrictions while other car washes should have to take steps to reduce water as required. Ms. Raulston noted that International Paper is one of the lowest water users in the industry and that they are not recognized for taking these steps nor do people understand that because they’ve taken these steps to reduce water, that an across the board percentage use reduction of as low as 10% could shut their plant down. She suggested that businesses that take actions like hers should be recognized through a state certification program and those large water users who use more than the industry average should have to reduce first. The TAC agreed to let Mr. Wagner take these comments and produce a proposal for “watch” and “warning” responses.

The final area of discussion was what mandatory responses should be imposed during a drought emergency situation. Generally the TAC agreed that in principle there should be some mandatory baseline responses to reduce demand with some reasonable opportunities for variances. After some discussion, the following assignments were made:

- (1) Watering grass areas. Mr. Buchanan and Ms. LeMay will develop some proposals and some reasonable exceptions. Mr. Haley will provide some management measures for golf courses to Mr. Wagner.
- (2) Irrigation. Mr. Buchanan and Ms. LeMay will develop some proposals.
- (3) Washing paved surfaces. Mr. Wagner will check with the DEQ VPDES staff regarding urban BMP requirements for Tier II permits.
- (4) Ornamental fountains. There was general agreement this is a non-essential use that could be prohibited.
- (5) Car washing. The TAC still needs to decide the question of commercial versus home washing. Mr. DuGoff provided suggested responses for car washes to Mr. Wagner.
- (6) Restaurant uses/swimming pools. Mr. Hancock will provide some suggested responses related to pools. Mr. McDonnell indicated that the responses used last year seemed okay but he would poll his membership.

Mr. Wagner requested that this information be provided to him as soon as possible so that he can revise the proposal for the next meeting. Meeting adjourned.

Send any comments regarding this draft meeting summary to swkudlas@deq.state.va.us no later than COB on March 7, 2003. The next meeting will be held on March 13, 2003 at 10 AM in DEQ's Piedmont Regional Office. Directions to PRO can be obtained at <http://www.deq.state.va.us/regions/piedmont.html>.